

The heroin and fentanyl epidemic is taking a devastating toll on all of our communities. Police officers in Maine tell me about the familiar patterns they see: Drug dealers and gang members, often from out-of-State and with criminal records, cross into Maine and approach drug addicts to be their straw buyers, people with clean records who may legally purchase firearms. They target addicts, who exchange guns for heroin to support their drug dependencies, and the cycle repeats time and again.

I received a briefing from Federal law enforcement officials about a case in Maine fitting this exact pattern. Gang members trafficked crack cocaine and heroin between New Haven, CT, and Bangor, ME, and committed acts of violence including assaults, armed robberies, attempted murder, and murder. They traded narcotics for firearms and then distributed those firearms to other gang members. This is exactly the criminal activity our bill aims to prevent. And our bill would complement existing laws that target criminals who are profiting off of firearm and drug trafficking.

It is very difficult to prevent and prosecute straw purchasing offenses under current Federal law. As I stated, right now, a straw purchaser can be prosecuted only for lying on a Federal form, which amounts to a paperwork violation.

The Stop Illegal Trafficking in Firearms Act would create new, specific criminal offenses for straw purchasing and trafficking in firearms. Instead of a slap on the wrist, these crimes would be punishable by up to 15 years in prison. For those straw purchasers who know or have reasonable cause to believe that the firearm they are acquiring will be used to commit a crime of violence, that crime would be punishable by up to 25 years in prison.

Our bill would also strengthen existing laws that prohibit gun smuggling. Right now, it is illegal for someone to smuggle a firearm into the United States with the intent to engage in drug trafficking or violent crime. To combat the drug cartels operating across our southern border, however, we must also prohibit firearms and ammunition from being trafficked out of the United States for these illegal purposes. In doing so, our bill would provide an important tool to combat trafficking organizations that are exporting firearms and ammunition from the United States and into Mexico where they are used by drug cartels that are in turn fueling the heroin crisis here at home.

I also want to emphasize that our bill protects the Second Amendment right of law-abiding citizens. It protects legitimate private gun sales and is drafted to avoid sweeping in innocent transactions and placing unnecessary burdens on lawful, private sales. It expressly exempts certain transactions that are allowed under current law, such as gifts, raffles, and auctions.

Furthermore, the bill expressly prohibits any authority provided by this act from being used to establish a Federal firearms registry.

The Stop Illegal Trafficking and Firearms Act will help keep guns out of the hands of criminals without infringing upon the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens. I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

IRISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, today I wish to commemorate Irish-American Heritage Month and the many contributions of Irish immigrants to the United States of America. The Irish have been a part of our country since its foundation. Donegal-born Richard Montgomery was the first American general to lose his life in the Revolutionary War. Especially during the 19th and early 20th centuries, many Irish immigrants came to America to escape religious persecution, famine, and economic hardship, and to seek new opportunities for themselves and their families.

Maryland's long tradition of religious tolerance provided safe haven for many Irish Catholics fleeing religious persecution as early as the 17th century. Maryland again became a leading destination for the Irish during the Great Hunger in the early 19th century. The Irish helped build and defend our country. They became farmers, soldiers, firefighters, police officers, factory workers, labor organizers, and politicians. Many Irish immigrants settled in southwest Baltimore and contributed great numbers to the workforce that built America's first railroad, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad.

Irish Marylanders have made notable contributions to both our Nation and our State in politics, science, and education. Marylander Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a third-generation Irish American, signed the Declaration of Independence, was a Founding Father, and served as the first U.S. Senator for Maryland. Medical trailblazer John Crawford emigrated from Ireland to Maryland and became famous for his contributions to eradicating smallpox, helping to identify transmission pathways, and improving vaccine distribution. Maryland has been home to numerous Irish Catholic bishops including John Carroll, James Gibbons, and Michael Curley. Bishop Carroll founded two universities, including St. Mary's College and Seminary. Bishop Gibbons advocated for the protection of exploited laborers during industrial expansion. Bishop Curley expanded education opportunities throughout Maryland. Descendants of Irish immigrants have also left their mark on America and on Maryland. Famous Marylanders with Irish ancestry include Edgar Allan Poe and Michael Phelps.

When the Irish came to America, they brought a tremendous sense of pride and grit. The resiliency of Irish

Americans has helped pull our Nation through difficult times. Irish Americans, despite facing trials and persecution, have persevered and have left a lasting, beneficial impact on our Nation; Yet they also maintain a strong and unique sense of identity and love for the Emerald Isle, enriching the diversity of our lives and communities. So, this month, in addition to donning your green and enjoying a pint of Guinness, I call on all Americans to remember and appreciate the many contributions of the Irish here in America.

HONORING OFFICER TYLER HERNDON

Mr. BURR. Mr. President, I want to honor the life of Officer Tyler Avery Herndon of the Mount Holly Police Department. On December 11, 2020, Officer Herndon's life was tragically cut short at just 25 years old while responding to a report of a break-in. I want to take a moment to remember him and his commitment to his community.

Officer Herndon had served in the Mount Holly Police Department for just shy of 2 years before his young life was taken. He had ambitions of becoming an FBI agent and was approaching the time needed as a police officer to become eligible to apply. He was described by his fellow officers as "the guy you just can't help but like" and someone who "lived a life of service, and always wanted to do what he could to help others."

Officer Herndon served the people of Mount Holly, NC, and today, we remember how he made the ultimate sacrifice. I want his family and the Mount Holly Police Department to know that my thoughts and prayers are with them as they grieve the loss of this exceptional young man. I know that Officer Herndon will be forever missed, and his service and sacrifice will not be forgotten.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

40TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOOD BANK OF DELAWARE

• Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I rise today on behalf of Delaware's congressional delegation in honor of the Food Bank of Delaware, which has provided healthy, nutritious food and education to Delaware families for 40 years.

The Food Bank of Delaware began its work in 1981 out of a modest basement in the Northeast State Services Center in Wilmington. Today, it is the largest hunger relief organization in the State. In the last fiscal year alone, the Food Bank of Delaware distributed more than 15 million pounds of food, served more than 49,000 households through its mobile pantry program, distributed 143,000 backpacks stocked with food to at-risk youth, provided nearly 28,000 supplemental food boxes to seniors, and inspired volunteers to give 49,000 hours of their time to help at its 2 warehouses and food distribution events.

But the Food Bank's work didn't stop there—it continues to address root causes of hunger by providing education and resources to those experiencing food insecurity so they can lift themselves out of poverty and advocate for others. Its culinary program has successfully graduated more than 700 students since the program began in 2002, and its graduates can be found in some of the finest restaurants around the country.

I particularly want to highlight the work the Food Bank of Delaware and its 54 full- and part-time employees have done and continue to do since March 16, 2020, when they were called to respond to the overwhelming need brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time they facilitated 33 mass drive through food distribution events throughout Delaware serving 42,847 households, served 34,706 households through the Healthy Pantry Centers at its Newark and Milford locations, distributed 153,431 Farmers to Families Food Boxes, and provided 353,009 meals and snacks to homeless Delawareans housed throughout the State to slow the spread of the coronavirus.

On behalf of both, U.S. Senator CHRIS COONS and U.S. Representative LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER, I rise today to honor the Food Bank of Delaware, its employees, and volunteers for 40 years of continued dedication to the health and nourishment of the citizens of Delaware. We know your impact on the lives of so many has been great, and your goal of ending hunger is one we will continue to work together on until we can reach the goal of eradicating food insecurity for all in Delaware.●

TRIBUTE TO ALEC FRAZIER

● Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. President, I rise today to honor the life and legacy of Alexander Fuld Frazier, a remarkable constituent who tirelessly advocated for disability rights for himself and on behalf of others.

Alec emerged as a leader and powerful advocate for disability rights and inclusion early in life. When he was 13, he spoke before sessions of Colorado's House and Senate Education Committees about the importance of special education funding. Thanks to his efforts, Colorado ultimately lifted the cap on funds for special education through a State constitutional amendment. At an early age, Alec was successful in pushing for change that meaningfully improved the lives of others.

I first met Alec in 2017 through his advocacy on Capitol Hill. He shared firsthand how Medicaid made it possible for him to lead a complete, fulfilling life. Alec was diagnosed with autism at a young age, and some professionals suggested institutionalization as he grew up. With the help of Medicaid, he benefitted from many services including therapy and an emergency brain surgery that saved his life.

Through his advocacy, he stood up for the millions of people who would have been severely harmed by past legislative proposals to slash Medicaid.

Alec was a man of many talents and pursuits. He attained his bachelor's degree in political science and master's degree in disability studies. In 2014, he founded his own advocacy firm called Autistic Reality and served as a powerful peer advocate, mentor, and advisor to others. Alec also published two books, "Without Fear: The First Autistic Superhero" and "Veni! Vidi! Autism!," that shape how we think about the representation of people with autism and disabilities in the arts. Through his written and spoken words, Alec sought to deepen others' understanding and appreciation of the varied experiences of people living with autism and disabilities.

Alec believed in and exemplified the motto, "nothing about us without us." Any individual or group of people deserve to shape the decisions made about them. Alec shaped his own path and destiny, and he empowered others to do the same along the way.

I ask my colleagues to join me in sending our gratitude for Alec Frazier's life, as well as our condolences to his father Donald Frazier, his mother Danielle Fuld, and his brother Nicholas Fuld Frazier. May we carry on his work to build a more inclusive society where all Americans can thrive and reach their highest potential.●

MESSAGES FROM THE PRESIDENT

Messages from the President of the United States were communicated to the Senate by Ms. Ridgway, one of his secretaries.

EXECUTIVE MESSAGES REFERRED

In executive session the Presiding Officer laid before the Senate messages from the President of the United States submitting sundry nominations which were referred to the Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

(The messages received today are printed at the end of the Senate proceedings.)

MEASURES PLACED ON THE CALENDAR

The following bill was read the second time, and placed on the calendar:

S. 937. A bill to facilitate the expedited review of COVID-19 hate crimes, and for other purposes.

MEASURES READ THE FIRST TIME

The following bills were read the first time:

H.R. 1868. An act to prevent across-the-board direct spending cuts, and for other purposes.

S. 963. A bill to authorize dedicated domestic terrorism offices within the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of

Justice, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to analyze and monitor domestic terrorist activity and require the Federal Government to take steps to prevent domestic terrorism, and for other purposes.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The following reports of committees were submitted:

By Mr. MANCHIN, from the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources:

Special Report entitled "History, Jurisdiction, and a Summary of Activities of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources During the 116th Congress" (Rept. No. 117-4).

By Mr. SCHATZ, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, without amendment:

S. 144. A bill to authorize the Secretary of Health and Human Services, acting through the Director of the Indian Health Service, to acquire private land to facilitate access to the Desert Sage Youth Wellness Center in Hemet, California, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 117-5).

S. 371. A bill to direct the Secretary of the Interior to take certain land located in Pinal County, Arizona, into trust for the benefit of the Gila River Indian Community, and for other purposes (Rept. No. 117-6).

By Mr. MENENDEZ, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, without amendment and with a preamble:

S. Res. 22. A resolution reaffirming the partnership between the United States and the Republic of Ecuador and recognizing the restoration and advancement of economic relations, security, and development opportunities in both nations.

S. Res. 34. A resolution recognizing the 200th anniversary of the independence of Greece and celebrating democracy in Greece and the United States.

By Mr. MENENDEZ, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and with an amended preamble:

S. Res. 35. A resolution condemning the military coup that took place on February 1, 2021, in Burma and the Burmese military's detention of civilian leaders, calling for an immediate and unconditional release of all those detained and for those elected to serve in parliament to resume their duties without impediment, and for other purposes.

S. Res. 36. A resolution reaffirming the strategic partnership between the United States and Mongolia and recognizing the 30th anniversary of democracy in Mongolia.

S. Res. 37. A resolution expressing solidarity with the San Isidro Movement in Cuba, condemning escalated attacks against artistic freedoms in Cuba, and calling for the repeal of laws that violate freedom of expression and the immediate release of arbitrarily detained artists, journalists, and activists.

By Mr. MENENDEZ, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, without amendment and with a preamble:

S. Res. 44. A resolution denouncing the Maduro regime's fraudulent legislative elections, the absence of acceptable conditions to ensure free, fair, and transparent electoral processes in Venezuela, and the further erosion of Venezuelan democracy.

S. Res. 81. A resolution honoring Las Damas de Blanco, a women-led nonviolent movement in support of freedom and human rights in Cuba, and calling for the release of all political prisoners in Cuba.

By Mr. MENENDEZ, from the Committee on Foreign Relations, with an amendment in the nature of a substitute and an amendment to the title and with an amended preamble:

S. Res. 97. A resolution calling on the Government of Ethiopia, the Tigray People's Liberation Front, and other belligerents to